



EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
COUNCIL ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20503

October 21, 2005

Dear Friends and Colleagues:

Thank you for your participation in the 2005 White House Conference on Cooperative Conservation. Together we have laid the foundation for a new dialogue and philosophy for natural resources conservation and environmental protection in the 21st Century.

Throughout the Conference, unique and innovative ideas were generated, new friendships and partnerships were formed, and everyone in attendance learned a great deal. I am proud of these accomplishments, and I hope you are as well.

In the Executive Order calling for the conference, President George W. Bush made it clear that the event marked the first step in a journey toward expanding cooperative approaches to conservation in America. The President is committed to carrying this effort forward into the new century, and you can rest assured that Secretary Rumsfeld, Secretary Norton, Secretary Gutierrez, Secretary Johanns, Administrator Johnson and I are prepared to ensure that this vision for cooperative conservation is realized in full. That said, I wanted to update you on some of the efforts underway to build upon the momentum generated in St. Louis.

At the conference, I announced the formation of a Task Force on Cooperative Conservation. Immediately following this announcement, an interagency working group began to develop the structure and objectives of this new team. I'm happy to report that on Monday, September 26, 2005, I convened the President's new Task Force on Cooperative Conservation. During the first meeting we outlined an aggressive agenda for following up on the conference and furthering implementation of Executive Order #13352.

The first order of business for the Task Force is to compile, edit and synthesize the suggestions and ideas that participants raised throughout the conference. When this task is complete, we will be able to develop an action plan for implementation of unique and innovative ideas for improving local participation in the implementation of Federal natural resources and environmental laws. Concurrently, the Task Force is also working to fulfill the Federal commitments made during the plenary presentations and the Federal panel on Day Three.

In addition, the Task Force has already begun to take action on some of your ideas. Throughout the conference, one major recurring theme was the need to integrate the principles of cooperative conservation into the hiring, training and rewarding of Federal natural resources and environmental employees. In response, all of the departments and agencies that hosted the conference have agreed, through their respective Chief Human Capital Officers, to develop a plan to foster the collaboration and partnering skills necessary to achieve cooperative conservation objectives within their organizations. In the very near future we will update you on the specific actions the Task Force is taking to coordinate these efforts.

As we move forward with these plans, we will do so united by a commitment to working in partnership with state, local and tribal representatives, businesses, environmental and conservation organizations, and private citizens. To do this effectively, we are developing ways

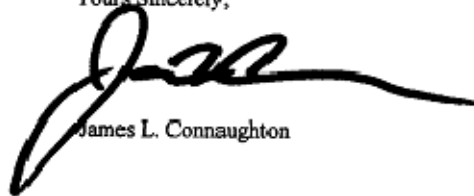
to continue our dialogue on cooperative conservation.

One way we will do this is through the internet. Currently, a number of conference materials including Day II summaries, newsletters, Federal agency remarks during plenary sessions, and the case study compendium are located on the following website: www.conservation.ceq.gov. I hope you will take the time to share this information with your colleagues, families and friends who were not able to join us in St. Louis. We will continue to update and improve our website to ensure that we keep you apprised of the most recent developments. In addition, we will also be sending periodic emails to update you on our progress.

In the meantime, I would encourage you to forward us any information about the conference that you would like to share with the conservation community. Please forward any news clippings, newsletter articles or other print information about the conference to Mitch Butler at mitchbutler@ceq.eop.gov. You can also fax materials to Mitch at (202) 456-0753.

I look forward to working with you as you proceed as champions of cooperative conservation, reaching out to hundreds of others to advance our lessons learned in St. Louis. Thank you once again for your efforts, and for your continued service to America.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Connaughton', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

James L. Connaughton